

Homicide and Suicide among the Joluo of Kenya

the local prophet (*jabilo*). When he returned to the village from his visit to the *jabilo*, he cursed his wife as follows: "I wish the disease which killed my heifers would kill you, my wife, for your daughter is a whore who has brought the disease of her womb to my cattle." From the evidence, the woman seemed to have planned her death carefully. She made her daughters swear that they would not be married to anyone who would ever give her husband cattle. She distributed all of her belongings to them and placed a curse on the village to the effect that her husband should never be able to marry another wife. She then entered her house and hanged herself.

Since that time, the Luo pointed out, his daughters have all eloped with persons who have not paid bride-wealth and no other woman has ever consented to marry him or to live with him.

The next case is typical of many which involve jealousy at the taking of a second wife, especially without the first wife's permission, or as in this case, expressly against her wishes. My informant was living near the village when the suicide took place and his mother became involved in it. The story was told to me in his mother's presence and she helped with the details.

Suicide Case No. 18.

A man, Okech, who was happily married, invited his wife's sister, Apolo, to come to live at his homestead to act as a nurse-maid for their first child.*

* This is common practice among the Joluo and often the "nurse" (*japidi*) is later married by her brother-in-law, especially if the sisters cooperate and agree to be happy together. Frequently the *japidi* will form a strong attachment to her brother-in-law, and marriage becomes desirable or even necessary. If a man marries a *japidi*, she becomes known as *nyer shueho*, the wife of the same blood, and the children of both wives share the same hut and trace descent through the elder sister. The term *shueho* is also used to describe a girl given to replace a sister who was unable to bear her husband a son; it therefore does have a slight connotation of stigma.